

Presiding Elder

1861 L²

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The first chapel, a log structure 20x40 feet, was built in time for the Pioneer Day celebration, July 24, 1860, and served the saints for nearly five years. Though it was small and its furnishings crude, it was accepted in the sight of the Lord. Those who came within its walls to worship were blessed abundantly with His spirit.

Because the people had faith that their new valley would be fruitful and yield food to sustain their lives, they were blessed profusely by the Lord. Their numbers grew rapidly and in 1861 the officials of the Church felt a ward should be organized.



JOSEPH STACY MURDOCK
First Bishop of Heber City

A familiar pattern in early Church government was followed as President Young and the general authorities established the ward in Heber. Joseph S. Murdock, not a resident of the valley, yet a man who had proved his ability in Church leadership, was ordained as bishop of the new ward. Under the direction of Church officials he moved with his family to Heber City and set about to organize the new ward. This pattern of calling Bishops and Stake Presidents was followed for many years by President Young and his successors, and proved to be a valuable train-



The children of Joseph Stacy Murdock, first bishop of Heber City. Most of them spent their lives in Wasatch County. Seated, left to right, Ann Coleman; Margaret Murray, Ellen C. (Lottie) Wright, Jane Hylton. Back row, left to right, Parley A. Murdock, Andrew Murdock, Alva Murdock, William Murdock, David N. Murdock, John H. Murdock and Frank Murdock.

ing program for leadership. Those of experienced leadership quickly trained their counselors and local brethren and then were often called to other areas, leaving Church administration in the hands of those they had trained.

Bishop Murdock chose men of the area as his counselors. They were John W. Witt and Thomas Rasband with John Hamilton as ward clerk. In addition to presiding over Heber Ward, these men also directed Church affairs throughout the valley.

Under Bishop Murdock's direction, presiding elders were appointed in the communities that by this time were large enough to meet separately. John Harvey was named at Center Creek in 1861 and Sidney Epperson was called as presiding elder in 1862 for the upper Snake Creek settlement. In 1864 David Van Wagonen was sustained as presiding elder for the lower Snake Creek area and John Watkins of Midway was later appointed to preside in Charleston and traveled there to hold meetings on Sunday.

The calling of Bishop Murdock in Heber Ward lasted until 1867 when he was called by President Young to move to Southern Utah and attempt to raise cotton there. During his six years in Wasatch County he gained the love and respect of the people for his kindness and gener-

